

MHSOAC

Mental Health Services
Oversight and Accountability Commission

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Department of Mental Health
1600 9th Street
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Subject: Comments on Proposed Issue Resolution Process

The Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission (MHSOAC) has reviewed the Department of Mental Health's (DMH) proposed issue resolution process and is providing comments for your consideration.

In early 20008, MHSOAC staff participated on a work group convened by DMH to develop a proposed issue resolution process for complaints made by stakeholders on issues related to the development and implementation of county MHSA components. MHSOAC staff made a presentation on this proposed process at the February 27, 2009 Commission meeting. The following feedback was made by several commissioners at that meeting.

1. Stakeholder concerns should first be addressed at the county level. The county should execute the issue resolution process in an expedient and appropriate manner. Each county process will vary, depending population, demographics, and organizational structure and close communication is critical.
2. Concerns were expressed regarding the need for stakeholders to request anonymity when they file an issue with DMH. Many stakeholders fear retribution if they bring issues forward to their local mental health departments. Recently, stakeholders attending one of the MHSOAC's committee meetings expressed reservations about bringing forth their concerns to their mental health director for fear of retaliation.

Fear of reprisal is a very real concern that will need to be carefully addressed at both the local and state level. At the local level, counties must ensure that they are involving stakeholders in the development and implementation of programs, as required by the MHSA. This open communication and inclusion will encourage stakeholders to bring issues to the county first.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback and we look forward to continued collaboration in the future.

Sincerely,

Sheri Whitt, Executive Director
Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission